

Legislators should listen to voters' decision

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We can no longer blame people if they don't feel their vote matters in state elections. Last week, some Republican legislators clearly told us our vote doesn't matter.

In November, Montanans approved I-155 by a 70-30 percent margin. When former state auditor John Morrison was promoting the plan prior to the election, Morrison noted 34,000 children of the state are uninsured. The program aims to cover 30,000 of these children.

Last week, however, state Republicans on a budget panel refused to fund the program that provide health insurance for 30,000 Montana children. They say because of budget problems the program has to be put on hold for two years.

Current state auditor Monica Lindeen was correct when she responded to the decision by saying, "It is unfortunate that these legislators showed such indifference to the thousands of Montana kids and small businesses in need of affordable health care. Lawmakers who balk at making health care a priority should be prepared to explain themselves to the citizens of Montana. In these economic times, this is a heavy blow to the pocketbooks of Montana families."

This is not the time to forget our commitment to our children. The way out of the current economical struggles is not going to be solved by forcing struggling families to pay medical bills that they can't afford. The program isn't a luxury, but rather a necessity for these families in our state. Hopefully, the children of Montana will prevail as winners during this legislative fight.

The voters of Montana understood the decision they were making in November. It's time for legislators to remember that when they make their choices for us in Helena.